

# INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

M: 11-29

**1 NAME** **Damascus High School**

HISTORIC

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION** **25921 Ridge Road**

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

**Damascus**

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

**8th**

STATE

**Maryland**

COUNTY

**Montgomery**

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

☐ DISTRICT

☒ BUILDING(S)

☐ STRUCTURE

☐ SITE

☐ OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

☒ PUBLIC

☐ PRIVATE

☐ BOTH

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

☐ IN PROCESS

☐ BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

☒ OCCUPIED

☐ UNOCCUPIED

☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

**ACCESSIBLE**

☒ YES RESTRICTED

☐ YES UNRESTRICTED

☐ NO

**PRESENT USE**

☐ AGRICULTURE

☐ MUSEUM

☐ COMMERCIAL

☐ PARK

☒ EDUCATIONAL

☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE

☐ ENTERTAINMENT

☐ RELIGIOUS

☐ GOVERNMENT

☐ SCIENTIFIC

☐ INDUSTRIAL

☐ TRANSPORTATION

☐ MILITARY

☐ OTHER

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

**Board of Education  
Montgomery County Public Schools**

Telephone #: **279-3617**

STREET & NUMBER

**850 Hungerford Drive**

CITY, TOWN

**Rockville**

VICINITY OF

**MD**

**20850**

STATE, zip code

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

**Department of Assessments and Taxation**

Liber #: **1028**

Folio #: **402**

STREET & NUMBER

**51 Monroe Street, 3rd Floor**

CITY, TOWN

**Rockville, MD 20850**

STATE

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1950

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

A. Hamilton Wilson

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Damascus High School is an important landmark in the history of Montgomery County and its public schools. Most significantly, it reveals the new direction of American architecture (and Montgomery County architecture) during the 1940s (when Wilson's plans were rendered). During this period, American architecture turned toward the factory or engineering aesthetic inspired by Bauhaus-inspired modernism and faith in technology.

In style, Damascus High School represents a departure from the traditional architectural image of 1930s Montgomery County schools. During the 1930s, Montgomery County's public schools were usually designed along classical lines, frequently in the Georgian style. This paralleled the persistence of classicism in American architecture during the first half of the 20th century. During the 1920s and 1930s, traditionalism came head to head with modernism. World War II brought a complete end to residual aspects of the American Renaissance (late 19th and early 20th century), a period which had encouraged a respect for the past and the use of classical architecture.

This structure shows the influence of the severe "Deco" style of the 1940s, which was affected by the rising tide of the International Style and the Streamline Moderne (both of which were on the cutting edge of architectural design during the 1930s). Its flat roof, planar treatment of wall and glazed surfaces, lack of extraneous elements, and no reference to traditional rules of architecture reveal the influence of European Modernism, the International Style. The International Style

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

(CONTINUED)

Inside the center block were classrooms (32'7" X 23'5"), a laterally extended (locker corridor), stairhalls, teachers' rooms and bathrooms. Wilson's plans called for acoustical tile ceilings, cork boards, slate blackboards, asphalt tile floors (over rubber base or in some places terrazzo base), plaster walls, some wood panels, and shelving.

The 1958 addition respected the first building, other building campaigns have not. In 1963, the 1950 building was changed by renovations and modernization. An addition for an industrial arts facility for junior high school students enclosed the rear court.

## NOTES FOR ENTIRE TEXT

1. E. Guy Jewell, From One Room to Open Space: A History of Montgomery County Schools From 1732 to 1965, Rockville, Maryland: 1976, 320-1.
2. "Damascus High School" and "The History of Damascus High School," Damascus High School File, Central Records, Montgomery County Public Schools.

## REPOSITORIES AND SOURCES

Construction Division, Montgomery County Public Schools;  
Central Records, Montgomery County Public Schools;  
Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.;

Also see: Karin M.E. Alexis's manuscript (1988) on the architectural history of educational institutions in Montgomery County, 1900-1945 (1988) (Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission and Maryland Historic Trust).

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

(CONTINUED)

stressed an engineering aesthetic, and called for "functionalism," "architecture as volume," "avoidance of applied decoration." All of this makes Damascus more closely resemble a conventional early 20th century factory than a traditional school. In effect, this academic edifice shows the complete acceptance of a style without historical associations for a traditional building-type: the school.

The use of Art Deco features (stepped center pavilion; articulation of alternating recessed and projecting building blocks) was by no means progressive since the style had developed during the 1920s. The school's symmetrical disposition and basic solidity (it is not a glass-sheathed building) respected both traditional and Art Deco principles of architecture (Art Deco design was influenced by Beaux-Arts planning methods). This shows the persistence of a traditional composition despite the abandonment of traditional forms of architecture. The strong horizontal directional force of this edifice relates to Bauhaus-inspired design.

This school was also a result of the dramatic population growth in the Washington area during World War II. In particular, there was a great increase in the number of school children in Montgomery County. Between 1920 and 1945 (when the school was first conceived as a design) the number of students attending public school rose from 6,195 to 17,310. During the same period, the county's expenditures on schools dramatically increased, reaching \$2,437,770.83 in 1945.<sup>1</sup> After the war, there was a post-war boom, which greatly affected Montgomery County's population.

By 1936 virtually all local schools in the farming communities around Damascus consolidated into Damascus School. The old Damascus High School building did not meet the standards for accreditation by the Middle States Association of Colleges. Therefore, plans for a new and larger facility near the old structure commenced during the 1940s. In 1950, the new building was completed and ready for the occupancy of 243 junior and senior high school students. A year later, a building for vocational training in industrial arts and agriculture, and a barn were erected. In 1953, Damascus High School received full accreditation.<sup>2</sup>